

What is claimed is:

1. A method to treat or ameliorate chronic pain comprising administering to a subject in need thereof an effective amount of a MMP7 modulator.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein a pharmaceutical composition comprising an effective amount of a MMP7 modulator is administered
3. A method according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said chronic pain is chronic neuropathic pain.
4. A method according to claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein said MMP7 modulator inhibits the enzyme activity of MMP7 in said subject.
5. A method according to claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein said MMP7 modulator inhibits MMP7 gene expression in said subject.
6. A method according to any of the previous claims wherein said MMP7 modulator is a compound belonging to a class of compound referred to as hydroxamic acid derivatives.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein said modulator is (S)-1-[(2S,3S)-2-(4-Chloro-phenyl)-3-hydroxycarbamoyl-pentanoyl]-piperidine-2-carboxylic acid isopropylamide in free or pharmaceutically acceptable salt forms.
8. A method according to any of claims 1 to 5 wherein said modulator comprises any one or more substances selected from the group consisting of antisense oligonucleotides, triple helix DNA, ribozymes, RNA aptamers and double stranded RNA wherein said substances are designed to inhibit MMP7 gene expression.
9. A method according to any of claims 1 to 5 wherein said modulator comprises one or more antibodies to MMP7, or fragments thereof, wherein said antibodies or fragments thereof can inhibit MMP7 enzyme activity.

10. A method to identify modulators useful to treat or ameliorate chronic pain comprising assaying for the ability of a candidate modulator to inhibit MMP7 enzyme activity.
11. A method to identify modulators useful to treat or ameliorate chronic pain comprising assaying for the ability of a candidate modulator to inhibit MMP7 gene expression.
12. A method according to claim 10 or 11 wherein said method further comprises assaying for the ability of an identified MMP7 inhibitory modulator to reverse the pathological effects observed in animal models of chronic pain and/or in clinical studies with subjects with chronic pain.
13. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a MMP7 modulator in an amount effective to treat or ameliorate chronic pain in a subject in need thereof.
14. The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 13 wherein said modulator inhibits the enzyme activity of MMP7.
15. The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 13 wherein said modulator inhibits MMP7 gene expression.
16. The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 13 or 14 wherein said modulator is a compound belonging to a class of compounds referred to as hydroxamic acid derivatives.
17. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 16 wherein said modulator is (S)-1-[(2S,3S)-2-(4-Chloro-phenyl)-3-hydroxycarbamoyl-pentanoyl]-piperidine-2-carboxylic acid isopropylamide in free or pharmaceutically acceptable salt forms.
18. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 13 or 15 wherein said modulator comprises any one or more substances selected from the group consisting of antisense oligonucleotides, triple helix DNA, ribozymes, RNA aptamer and double stranded RNA wherein said substances are designed to inhibit MMP7 gene expression.

19. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 13 or 14 wherein said modulator comprises one or more antibodies to MMP7, or fragments thereof, wherein said antibodies or fragments thereof can inhibit MMP7 enzyme activity.
20. Use of a hydroxamic acid derivative for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment of chronic pain.
21. Use of (S)-1-[(2S,3S)-2-(4-Chloro-phenyl)-3-hydroxycarbamoyl-pentanoyl]-piperidine-2-carboxylic acid isopropylamide for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment of chronic pain.
22. A method to diagnose subjects suffering from chronic pain who may be suitable candidates for treatment with MMP7 modulators comprising assaying protein levels or mRNA levels of this protein in a biological sample from said subject wherein subjects with increased levels compared to controls would be suitable candidates for MMP7 modulator treatment.
23. A method to treat or ameliorate chronic pain comprising:
 - (a) assaying for MMP7 mRNA and/or protein levels in a subject; and,
 - (b) administering to a subject with increased levels of MMP7 mRNA and/or protein levels compared to controls a MMP7 modulator in an amount sufficient to treat or ameliorate the pathological effects of chronic pain.
24. A diagnostic kit for detecting mRNA levels and/or protein levels of MMP7 in a biological sample, said kit comprising:
 - (a) a polynucleotide of MMP7 or a fragment thereof;
 - (b) a nucleotide sequence complementary to that of (a);
 - (c) a MMP7 polypeptide, or a fragment thereof; or
 - (d) an antibody to a MMP7 polypeptide

wherein components (a), (b), (c) or (d) may comprise a substantial component.